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Abd al-Rahman Ahmed
TRADE, DEBT AND DEVELOPMENT
IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA:
A Muslim Initiative to the Rescue?*

Dr. Usman Bugaje

Abstract:
The objective of this paper is threefold. First to provide general but relevant details on the economy of sub-Saharan Africa, focusing on trade, debt and development, thus providing a background for the discussions of the congress. Secondly the paper will discuss the major trade blocks within the region such as ECOWAS, PTA, etc. and examine their impact so far. Thirdly the paper will then look at the various attempts at salvaging the African economy, from economic development aid, through debt reduction, to the recent Global Coalition for Africa. The paper will then raise some fundamental issues regarding development in sub-Saharan Africa. It will then explore alternative visions of economic development. The thrust of the argument of the paper is to show the futility of the efforts that are tied to or rely on the goodwill of the economic North for the recovery of African economy. Africa will simply have to look elsewhere for its recovery. Can a Muslim initiative come to the rescue?

Introduction
The mere mention of Africa today conjures up an image of poverty, debt and deprivation. This is the image which western media has consistently and successfully conveyed over the years, an extension of its aggression on Africa, dating some five centuries back. It is true that Africa is poor, unable to enjoy equitable terms of trade, labouring under a debilitating debt burden and suffering all manners of deprivations, but it is certainly not the whole truth. In any war, especially the kind which the West has been engaged with Africa, truth is usually the first casualty. It needs to be recalled that, Africa was drawn into the Western led global system first as a supplier of slaves who worked the plantations, later as the main source of raw materials that kept the industries of Europe busy and today robbed of what little they make in the name of servicing a perpetual debt that was never meant to be paid, as well as a dumping ground for all manners of manufactured goods and even

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toxic wastes.

To be sure, Africa’s current predicament is not for want of resources. For Africa has a rich soil for Agriculture ad abundant water resources for irrigation, transportation and hydroelectric generation. In terms of mineral resources, Africa has 97% of the world reserves of chromium, 85% of platinum, 64% of gold, 50% of manganese, and 25% of uranium, (1) not to mention the all important oil, EEC’s dependence on Africa include 95% of its uranium, 46% of Tropical woods, 41% of chrome 41% of cocoa, 25% of coffee, 23.3% of manganese, 20% cotton to mention a few. (2) But these resources belong to Africa only in name, for Africans do not decide the prices of these commodities, all they need do is tune the BBC and it is there on the air. And the IMF and World Bank will decide the value of their currency and the level of subsidy they can give to their citizens, all in the name of a Structural Adjustment Program designed, ostensibly, to help their poor economies.

Sucked dry, unable to find any succour, naturally the living conditions deteriorated. A recent UN report entitled Brave New Third World observed that “Health systems are collapsing for lack of medicines, schools have no books and universities suffer from a debilitating shortage of library and laboratory facilities... the hungry go without food, massive resources are being hived off to servicing the continent’s $138bn external debt.” (3) The report further blamed the US commercial banks and the IMF for what it called “shocking and extensive assault” on the economic sovereignty of Africa and the rest of the third world. By their own admission the IMF and the World Bank reckoned in a report a few years back that 950 million people are living in absolute poverty and squalor, 350 million of these live in Asia, 280 million in the rural areas of Sub-Saharan Africa and 80 million in Latin America. This number, the report further admitted, had been increasing rapidly throughout the 80’s. (4) John Pilger a veteran British journalist captured the spirit of this grim picture when he titled his 1992 revealing documentary on debt problem, “War By Other Means” (5)

Trade

This link between trade and war appear to be rooted deep in European history, for a Dutch conqueror was reported to have said, in 1614, that “Trade cannot be maintained without war nor war without trade”. The Economist of October 1994 appear to be echoing these words when it captioned its cover story, a survey of the global economy, “War of the Worlds”. (6) If there is ever going to be a third world war it is more likely to be on trade rather than nationalism. Africa had never enjoyed equitable terms of trade with the West from the time the Portuguese merchants started exploring its coasts in the 15th century to this second half of the 20th century when physical presence has been obviated by a more subtle and sophisticated mechanism, of which the IMF and The World Bank may well be the tip of an iceberg.

Consequently Africa, with all its population, has barely 3% of world income and its share of world trade is under 5%. (7) Since the last two decades the economic situation had been deteriorating at a frightening rate. By 1991 Africa’s share of world trade had dropped to about 2.1% (8) and a worsening
per capita income drop. Productivity was receding in the face of a crushing debt burden. Between 1982 and 1987 observed Okigbo the per capita income of the 17 most indebted countries fell by one seventh, that of Sub-Saharan Africa by one fourth. Investment per capita in Africa, he added, was lower in 1987 than in 1964... By 1991 Africa’s total debt was $178.1 billion representing 109% of its GNP of $162.5 bn or some 339.5% of its export of goods and services. Its total debt service of $10.34 bn in 1991 was 19.8% of its exports of goods and services in that year. (10)

By last year the terms of trade had already worsened. At the November 95 meeting of the Global Coalition for Africa, the GCA secretariat’s background paper noted that Sub-Saharan Africa, although accounting for 10 percent of the world population, currently provides just 1.7% of world exports. The paper continued to note that, due to a protracted decline in Africa’s competitiveness, its small share of world trade has been shrinking over the first few decades. (11) Discussions at the GCA focused at ways African countries could come to grips with the realities of today’s world market, by developing strategies to enhance their competitiveness and seek out new opportunities to promote exports beyond the primary commodities that the continent today relies. A former Ghana’s finance minister suggested that as labour costs rise in Asian and African countries could seize the opportunity to develop their labour-intensive export industries. But a Kenyan finance minister pointed out a problem. Currently, he noted, Kenya’s textile industry is subjected to tariff barriers that limits its ability to export, and thus to further develop. If such tariffs are not lowered, he asked, how then do we industrialise?. (12) This only one of many such hurdles.

Issues of trade are supposed to be addressed and resolved by forums like UNCTAD, WTO and the Uruguay Round. The latest UNCTAD IX which took place in Midrand, South Africa, ended on the May 11 with a restructuring of UNCTAD, which the secretary general sees as giving the organisation a new lease of life. The Conference’s final document, expectedly, noted that UNCTAD, has a clear comparative advantage in tackling trade related development issues and should continue to facilitate the integration of developing countries and countries in transition in the international trading system. (13) But about 100 NGOs which attended to lobby for better deal for developing countries claimed that UNCTAD IX did not pay sufficient attention to the crucial issues of debt, aid and commodity policies, arguing that, global responsibility and international co-operation are declining at this crucial time when the challenges are greater than ever. (14) African groups delegate joined the NGOs in expressing their disappointment with the conference document.

The NGOs went further to observe that some poor countries, by opening their economies in accordance with the agreements reached in the Uruguay Round, are being forced to de-industrialise. They quoted UNCTAD studies that found no direct correlation between liberalisation and devaluation on the one hand and growth and diversification of output on the other. These reports showed that countries which achieved a significant degree of liberalisation in the 1980’s - such as Burundi, Tanzania, Malawi and Gambia-suffered severe
economic dislocation and poor growth rates.(15) Globalisation is only making this situation worse for, contrary to claims of UNCTAD and Uruguay Round, it promises to shut out hundreds of millions of the poor, in the words of a Brazilian finance minister, perhaps for ever - from the promise of prosperity (16) By its own admission UNCTAD said the marginal improvements of some of the economies of African LDCs, due to the increase in commodity prices, especially in coffee and cotton, seen recently is likely to be temporary. It added that while the liberalisation through the Uruguay Round agreements may provide important long term opportunities for growth, in the short term they risk greater marginalisation since few LDCs have internationally competitive industries and many may face higher food import prices and an erosion of existing tariff references in their export markets. (17) It was in this light that the director of WTO proposed that the rich countries apply zero tariffs to the export goods of the LDCs. (18) This he assured the DCs, will pose no danger to them. But will they? it is highly unlikely.

Regional Groups
There are at least eight prominent political and economic organisation in Africa today. (19) Of these the most important ones in the sub-Saharan Africa are the ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States) (20) and PTA (Preferential Trade Area for Eastern and Southern Africa) (21) which became COMESA (Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa) in December 1994. There are indeed minor grouping around rivers and lakes like the Manar River Union and lake Chad Basin Development Authority in West Africa and similar grouping around the Nile valley in both and eastern Africa and around the Great Lakes. Though economic issues are often involved, the focus are essentially agricultural or the sharing of water resources.

ECOWAS was formed in 1975 amidst unfair and high expectations. It aimed at political and economic co-operation that will eventually lead to total economic integration with a common currency. While five are former British colonies and are therefore English speaking, the rest are mainly former French colonies and therefore French speaking. Language, to be sure, was the least of the problems, the economy of the Francophone countries, typical of French colonisation, was assimilated into the French imperial economy, with the CFA franc tied to the French franc and economic transactions going through the bank of France. The objective of ECOWAS were thus out to liberate the economy of the Francophone countries, among others. This could not have gone down well with the French. France did not hide this either, for it often schedule meetings in France at short notices to frustrate some of the ECOWAS Heads of States meetings. It took numerous other steps some too subtle to discern, the latest being the massive devaluation of the CFA franc (50%) at once, which was seen as aimed at making Nigerian goods expensive in the Francophones and therefore frustrating intra regional trade. (22)

France, to be fair, is not the only problem, there is the inertia and indolence of bureaucracy which is known to be good at dragging its feet. Ab-
sence of private sector participation was another, for the West Africa Clearing House (WACH) formed also in 1975, had not moved an inch, two decades on. WACH was formed to implement a workable interest payment mechanism preparatory to the formation of a single monetary zone in the region. (23) So two decades after its formation ECOWAS has remained a dream, though it has facilitated the movement of peoples, it has not done the same with goods, which was one of the major objectives for which it was established. Goods do manage to move within the region 90% of these goods are smuggled (24).

A private initiative is coming to the rescue. In September of this year a West African Enterprises Network (WAEN) met in Lagos to consider the practical steps to be taken for the realisation of the ECOWAS dream. WAEN is an NGO made up of 300 business men and women drawn from 12 countries of the sub-region, both Anglo and Francophones, with headquarters in Ghana. Some of the steps considered included improving dialogue between the state and the private sector, facilitating the financial restructuring of private enterprises, increase in the competitiveness of West African products and promoting entrepreneurship. During the Lagos meeting the organisation signed a protocol agreement with regional international banks like Citizen International Bank, ECOBANK and CAL Merchant Bank of Senegal. One of the major things the WAEN is looking at is the possibility of dismantling of tariffs and quotas on intra union trade and establishment of common external tariffs on goods of non-member countries. (25) How far WAEN can go, we have to wait and see.

PTA was formed in 1981, just a year after the formation of SADC (Southern African Development Community). Much earlier, in 1969, the Southern African Customs Union (SACU), was formed. PTA is a much larger conglomeration with a wider objective of economic integration, it therefore subsumes the objectives of these smaller groups. Until the end of the era of apartheid, the Republic of South Africa was not in the PTA. The PTA story is very much like that of ECOWAS. Throughout the 80s there was hardly any appreciable improvement in intra regional trade. In 1987, intra-PTA trade accounted for 5.2% of total imports and 7.2% of total exports. Compared to 1980 (5.6 and 7.1% respectively), these shares have remained fairly constant. Moreover, intra-PTA trade in absolute figures also remained constant (1980: US$649 million; 1987: US$644 million). (26)

Some of the reasons for this dismal failure are not far to find. Until the recent entrance of South Africa, the impact of which is yet to be assessed, the PTA lacked a leading economy. Kenya and Zimbabwe were the two stronger partners, but even these belong to the low-income group of the developing countries and have scarcely been able to provide a market of adequate size for regional integration to produce sizeable dynamic gains. Some of the terms were not particularly favourable to the PTA member countries and PTA institutions were never granted the significant legislative or executive power necessary to perform (27) Three more reasons have been identified by Schweickert: scarcity of foreign exchange which was allocated to essential imports mostly coming from OECD countries; the trade policies of the past
led to the establishment of other non-tariff barriers such as high cost of transport and communication; and not the least, political rivalry originating from the need to protect funds essential for the ruling elite to survive. (28) It has been hoped that the entrance of post-apartheid South Africa and the formation of COMESA could change all these, but preliminary reports have not been encouraging (29)

On the whole it would appear that sub-Saharan African experiences with regional economic groupings has not been successful as yet. Varying colonial cultures, interference, subtle as these are, of the former imperial powers, weak economies, sluggish bureaucracy, elite avarice and perhaps sheer inaptitude seemed to have conspired to frustrate the efforts so far. Private initiative like the West African Enterprises Network may well provide an alternative, but more creative alternatives could also be developed.

Debt
The crippling nature of debt is too familiar to warrant detailed discussion here. The position of Tanzania seem to summarise it all. In the recent UNCTAD IX, the Tanzanian President Benjamin Mkapa said that his country spends $5 per capita servicing debt each year, compared to $2 per capita it spends on health. (30) From 1980 to 1990 the total debt of sub-Saharan African more than doubled. The total for 1995 is over $223 billion while the debt/export and debt/GNP ratios for the same year are 269.8% and 74.1% respectively. (31) The issue is no longer whether these countries can pay or not but whether they can survive or not. The recent talks about debt relief for heavily-indebted poor country (HIPC, in the new jargon) has already run aground. While IMF and World Bank are taking pride in shifting the debate from "if" to "how" creditors could help HIPC's, the creditors themselves are not willing to yield an inch. (32) In a 22-23 April meeting in Washington, this year, the most significant detail that emerged was that the Bank and Fund have no intention of writing off any debt, hence the need for the trust fund. The most they plan to do, said Fund officials, is to extend maturities on affected loans. This explanation did little to win over either creditors or debtors. (33) If there is ever to be any relief it would clearly be too little too late.

One cannot help but agree with John Pilger that Debt is nothing but War by Other Means. It was a war, Pilger argued which you do not see on the TV screens because it is waged by more sophisticated means and its principal weapon is debt. The casualties of this war include half-million children that die every year, more than twice the number that died in the recently concluded Gulf War. It is a war Pilger insisted, which make a mockery of the Western humanitarian gestures such as Western aid, and the spectacular life aid show in 1985. For, as Pilger found out, the very poor for whom the life aid was staged paid the Western countries that same year twice as much in terms of debt servicing. Pilger had no difficulty conceding the fact that it is the poor that finance the rich and not vice versa. (34) The anti-slavery society, a human right group thus declared a debt a contemporary form of slavery. This is clearly demonstrated in the Philippine where 44% of the national
budget goes to foreign banks to service loans while only 3% of the budget goes to health services.(35)

One cannot also help but recall the words of Leo Tolstoy, the author of "War and Peace", when he said, "I sit on a man's back, choking him, and making him carry me, and yet assure myself and others that I am very sorry for him and wish to ease his lot by all possible means—except by getting off his back". (36) Who take the responsibility for the suffering and death of millions of the poor in countries like Tanzania whose health budget is robbed to service debt? Even Golda Meir of Israel conceded that, "there is no difference between one's killing and making decisions that will send others to kill". (37) But in Africa's relation with the West, this is not new, it is a continuation of history. Africa ought to have known better.

**Development**

Not surprisingly, sub-Saharan Africa rather than developing has been registering negative development and de-industrialisation. In the last five years frantic efforts have been made to salvage Africa, the most dramatic being the Global Coalition for Africa, a coalition spearheaded by the Dutch in the spirit of the Marshall plan for Europe after the World War II. The GCA was first sponsored in a conference in Maastricht in July 1990 by the Dutch government and formerly established the following year. The GCA wishes to address the no doubt important question, "Can Africa's decline be reversed?" The simple answer, the GCA argued, is yes...but Africa will need sustained and increased external support if it is to meet the challenge without unreasonable hardship. (38) The documents of the first advisory committee meeting of the GCA which held in Paris, September 1991 are quite impressive and have identified eight issues to be addressed. (39) The GCA seeks to work with and expedite action on existing international programmes aimed at the recovery of African economy. It is perhaps too early to say what its impact has been, but until it begins to translate into tangible results it is safer to believe that it is all political language, which, in the words of Orwell, "is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable, and to give an appearance of solidity to pure wind". (40)

Within Africa itself there has been a lot of reflection and rethinking among scholars and series of meetings and the signing of numerous charters and declarations (41) among the political leadership. We shall not allow these political slogans to detain us even for a moment; for we know these rituals well enough to know what to expect. As for the scholars they are many and varied. By some chance (or is it design?) last year's issue of African Development Review (42) has brought together articles of some of the best minds in the field, Samir Amin, Ali Mazrui, Sadig Rashid, Abdalla Bujra, to mention some. Sadig Rashid's 'Rethinking Development Strategy in Africa' has made an extensive survey and analysis and examined what he calls opportunities for the unfolding scenarios. Ali Mazrui looked at social engineering and political bridge building for the 21st century, while Jugessur and Hamel jointly looked at the possibility of technology leap-frogging in Africa. Abdalla Bujra, the guest editor tried to bring all the good ideas in the
volume into some focus. His conclusions echo a sense of urgency as well as desperation. The situation facing Africa is very serious. Africa has no time to think and discuss all aspects of the problematic of the future useful though such an exercise might be. Africa must act now before the situation worsens and the future becomes even bleaker. (43) He went further, paraphrasing Ndewa and Green and laying further stress: “African countries often appear to be waiting for WB and IMF support and strategic guidance on what to do. However past experience of help and aid from the international community have neither brought about sustainable growth nor diminished the crises. The faith in outside help is therefore misplaced. Africans must have confidence and faith in themselves and act now! There is no shortage of long term plans, strategies and programmes. African capacity to prepare for the future is available and adequate. What is required is vision, leadership and resolve!” (44)

But does Africa have the visionary leaders? If it does, would the life presidents give them a chance? We can not escape the fact that governance is at the centre of Africa’s recovery. Indeed, the mess is largely the making of mercenary regimes with the active connivance of the same international community that look more worried about them. The primary concern of these leaders has never been the interest of their people, but the elusive game of self-perpetuation which is pursued vigorously and recklessly until the expiry of either the leader or the state that he heads. (45) This inordinate ambition to stay in power at all costs, observes Kumo, ensures, quite inescapably, a massive wave of institutional corruption and the plunder of public resources leaving the rest of society to wallow in neglect and despair. (46) This despondency has generated so much apathy and pessimism that the whole idea of a nation state is becoming cynical. As Stephen Ellis rightly observed, given the record of some African states in robbing their own citizens, it is at least debatable who needs them the most: the citizens of the country or the international powers which created them in the first place and have done so much to prolong their life, since independence, with financial and other aids. (47)

**Muslim initiative**

It is very obvious that the sub-Saharan Africa or any part of the developing world, cannot rely on the so called developed world to develop. That will be the height of folly. Sub-Saharan Africa will have to explore an alternative vision of trade and development, one that does not rely on Western financial institutions. This is certainly a tall order but there doesn’t seem to be any escape from it. The complexity of the sub-Saharan, as indeed other regions, suggests that the exercise has to be systematic and discreet. For while Muslims may well be a majority in sub-Saharan Africa, colonial rule and contemporary social engineering had elbowed them out of power and influence. Countries in the region are essentially secular states, often with a legacy of aversion to Islam, which has been sustained and reinforced by current Western propaganda. So Islam may not as yet provide a basis for co-operation between states in the region. But Muslims within these states could create a va-
riety of networks which can in time transform not only the economic but also the social and political milieu for good. This is a task that can and indeed ought to be done.

Trade has throughout history, especially that of the sub-Saharan Africa, been one of the most effective vehicle for the conveyance of thoughts and ideas and eventual social and political transformation. It was through the Trans-Saharan trade route that Islam spread in to Africa south of the Sahara. Similarly it was through trade that Islam reached the eastern and southern coasts of Africa from where it penetrated the hinterland. In resuscitating trade network among Muslims in Africa, as indeed elsewhere, Muslims will not only reunite themselves with history but recover one of the most effective means of strengthening the ties of brotherhood and promoting the culture of Islam. There is, however, another network which has today assumed great significance and seems set to become ever greater in the 21st century. This is the network among Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs). The NGOs are providing opportunity for thoughts as well as funds to be focussed at specific problems and networking among them often provide opportunity to share ideas and experiences to jointly tackle issues of common interest. Networking pools scanty resources together and makes lobbying more effective. The spirit of co-operation that this networking provides is particular useful in developing an ecumenical base were Muslims and non-Muslims can work together to alleviate practical human problems.

These appear to be essential if the continent is to map out a new direction, one that could make it stand up to the ideological intimidation of the West. In this respect the current pattern of investments and educational orientation in Africa is one that must immediately be addressed to facilitate the emergence of a new vision. And it looks like Muslims can (some would say ought to) lead such an endeavour, if only because they have an alternative educational base and a world-view that can contend with and stand up to the prevailing Western paradigm. Such a forum should begin to address, systematically, the following issues on which the economic development and political future of the region appear to hinge.

1. Food Security
Perhaps the significance of food security is too obvious to warrant any comment. In 1984, the Brandt report on food security observed that, in sub-Saharan Africa food production per capita of the population has decreased by 20% since the early 1960s. Rising grain imports, now amounting to over 10m tonnes p.a., have been unable to compensate for this trend. Consequently, per capita consumption throughout the region has fallen steadily. (48) Since this report, the situation has worsened dramatically reaching calamity proportion prompting a UN sponsored world conference on hunger in Rome Italy some times this November (1996). If we can’t feed ourselves the issue of economic development appear to be a luxury we cannot afford. Poor nutrition engenders poor and stunted growth, not only of the human body but also and more important of the human mind. Poor anthropology simply means poor future.
It is easy to see through the rhetoric of the international organisations including, not surprisingly, the FAO. In a recent BBC interview, (49) the FAO representative in Burkina Faso, one of the African Sahelian countries, admitted that the country has adequate land and water resources to feed itself and the agricultural inputs it needed are much cheaper than the food donated by Western donor countries. The donors, however, would rather donate food on end than the technical inputs to make Burkina Faso self-sufficient, for self-sufficiency in food engenders freedom and independence. It is also interesting to note that while Western countries keep subsidising their farmers in more ways than one, they keep urging and often forcing poor countries of the developing world not to subsidise their own agriculture. This makes these poor countries weak and vulnerable and the subversion of their sovereignty easy.

2. Economic empowerment and the elimination of poverty

Very much like food security, elimination of poverty and economic empowerment of the populace is essential to proper and sustainable economic development. Sadiq Rasheed believes that a fundamental improvement of human conditions is absolutely essential for any meaningful development, for the intensity of human suffering and deprivation among the majority of the African people aggrieved by SAPs is such as to make any development impossible. (50) The first step, it would appear, is to reorient the mind. As the Chinese would say, giving someone a fish feeds him only for a day but teaching him to fish feeds him for a lifetime. There is, therefore, an urgent need for the creation of awareness among businessmen and women in the region to appreciate the business climate of the 21st century without abandoning ethics. The tendency for Muslims to ascribe to the divine all their failure has to be checked and balanced if they are to face the challenges of the times. This will require a whole package of sustained enlightenment at various levels including the grassroots were the peasants, farmers, artisans, etc. operate. Ethical and cultural consideration have often made many Muslims to shun away from the present western banking and financial institutions in the countries of the sub-Saharan Africa. This shut many of these potential entrepreneurs away from full utilization of business facilities. It is important that a vigorous drive is made to institute alternatives that are in harmony with Islamic ethical considerations. This will not only allow full reins to Muslim capital, but by eliminating the exploitative nature of the interest based institutions, many people could be liberated and indeed empowered economically. This along with awareness and mobilisation could pool more capital and increase the number of entrepreneurs among Muslims in the region, thus powering the development engine. The interest based banking may still continue to operate not only because the setting is plural but also because Islamic banking needs to compete in a free market in order to be efficient and excel.

There are other indigenous traditional mechanisms for the elimination of poverty among the Muslim community like Zakah. Currently, for the most part, such God-given facilities are used, if unwittingly, to perpetuate a de-
pendency syndrome where many recipients are doled an insignificant amount that keeps them perpetually as recipients. A more ingenious system of collection and distribution could be designed such as to transform recipients to givers, so that more of the poor are weaned off the dole, wealth generated and development enhanced.

3. Human Resource Development
The success of the massive infusion of capital in the transformation of post war Europe under the Marshal plan had mystified the role of capital in economic transformation. But perhaps not any more, for recent research has shown an increasing shift from capital to technology. After an extensive literature reviews, M. H. Khalil asserted that it is evident that technological innovations are critical ingredients of economic transformation. Much of the capital theories of yesteryears emphasised unduly the role of capital as a factor of production in the economic process. Yet, what truly transforms an economy are innovations that are spilled over from time to time.(51) This certainly is more than just theory, for it has been the major factor in the transformation of the Malaysian economy. The massive man power development in the 70s and 80s was clearly the backbone of Malaysia's industrialisation. There are no two ways about human resource development. True, this costs money and many African states may be constrained, but it has to first be given the priority it deserves and a strategy to maximise opportunity within existing constraints could then be developed.

Here Jugessur and Hamel’s suggestions come handy. In appreciation of the financial requirements and the relatively long gestation periods of such schemes they have suggestions which governments with the necessary political will and vision for development can try. They are suggesting, among other things, licensing and industrial property rights and concentration on selective areas of technology like biotechnology which in Africa could transform the agro-based industries first. There must be better suggestions documented else where or still in the minds of men, but it is only through the development of human resources that any meaningful transformation could be brought about.

4. Changing the Pattern of investment
Developing countries all over the globe are clamouring for investment from outside, invariably from the rich countries of the economic North. Many have gone out of their way to create attractive concessions like extensive tax holidays etc. Investment, as we have seen is not just economics, it has serious, if subtle, political undertones and implications. If we have in the region a predominance of Western capital it is more likely to translate into Western gain. On the other hand if we an indigenous or friendly capital, the indigenes are more likely to have the opportunity to develop and advance themselves. In these days of privatisation and exploration of hitherto untapped economic resources of the sub-Saharan Africa, Muslim capital could be crucial to the economic as well as the political future of the region.

We hardly need to stress the fact that who ever controls investment in a
country invariable controls the future, as the role of several multinationals have amply demonstrated. It is also instructive that the very west that denigrates the economic and political situation in Africa has not ceased to invest in it, if anything Western companies and financial institutions are always seeking for more avenues for investments. Muslims who carry their capital to the West for investment run more risks than is generally realised, as the BCCI and similar experiences testify. Unless the pattern of investment in sub-Saharan Africa can change, the battle for independence and survival is far from over.

5. The Issue of Governance

Lastly, but certainly most importantly, is the issue of governance. Without good governance no meaningful development could take place. This is unfortunately a complex issue in respect of which the Muslim world is in hardly any better position than Africa itself. One in fact can go further to say that in terms of inspiration the contemporary Muslim world has hardly anything to contribute, having itself fallen prey to same calamity. What could be done seem to depend very much on ones diagnosis of the problem. Most of the scholars in the field have not, however, come up with a tangible diagnosis of the causes of the crisis in governance in contemporary Africa. There are more descriptions than prescriptions and when it comes to causes, scholars have not gone beyond economic crisis, Western interference and the like. But these can easily be the consequences of bad governance. These kind of diagnosis only leaves us with the chicken and egg situation and ignores the more fundamental issues of the absence of the basis for a state in the first place.

Ali Mazrui, rather expectedly, is the only scholar who seemed to have confronted the issue headlong. What he seems to be saying is that the modern African state is essentially a colonial creation which has since come under several stress and has been unable to cope. The crisis in governance is nothing but the “death pang” of an artificial structure which cannot but collapse, hopefully to give way to a more realistic arrangement. In his more cautious words, “... are we facing birth pangs or death pangs in the present African crisis? Are we witnessing the real bloody forces of decolonisation as the colonial structures are decaying or collapsing? Is the colonial state being washed clean with the blood of victims, villains and martyrs?” To be sure, two and a half decades ago, Professor Abdullahi Smith of blessed memory, had foreseen the problems and had urged scholars to turn attention to this important issue of state formation. Smith was clearly convinced that the most important set of political problems facing the African continent today is that relating to the formation of States. The problem, he observed, was that so many new states have been theoretically created over-night during the past two decades by the sudden passing of constitutional laws, or the signing of constitutional agreements, that the process of state formation would seem to be one of almost magical simplicity. Yet... no amount of waving the wand of independence can make a state if the human conditions in which the attempt is made to create it are not appropriate.
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Now that our ill-fated experiment with foreign models of state and development has come full circle, we may have to retrace our steps back to whence we came. We have got to embark on a search for an alternative to the hollow structures and institutions. In this search, one of the greatest contributions of Muslims from within and outside the sub-Saharan African could give is to embark on massive research projects that will aim at bringing our indigenous pre-colonial political, social and economic systems and experiences. These can best be done by undertaking translations of works of our pre-colonial scholars into the more popular European languages, sponsoring research projects in indigenous political culture and values, appointing professorial chairs and of course publishing the enormous literature on the subject. This way at least, we provide an alternative to the European models and hopefully begin to steer away from the vicious circle we have been trapped in for the best part of this century. It is difficult to see what more can be done on this matter at this stage.

Conclusion
The sub-Saharan region, like many such victims, has for centuries been caught up in an intricate web of exploitation which has stunted its economic growth and now threatens to decimate it to extinction. Such efforts and initiatives marshalled, including regional economic co-operation, have not come to fruition and may never. Co-operation among Muslim countries of the region does not appear to be feasible as yet. A private Muslim initiative may prove a way out of this imbroglio. But for it to make a difference it will have to be dextrous, creative and smart all at once. It will also have to address the most pressing and fundamental issues such as food security, poverty, human resource development, pattern of investment and the vexing issue of governance. Networking with as many NGOs as possible seems inevitable in the 21st century. A coalition of NGOs is more likely to give Muslim private efforts better chance of participation and is certainly less ominous than a coalition of the same Western powers who only decades ago were riding over the shoulders of their victims and have not quite come off. Or have they?
Footnotes:
7. Ibid.
12. Ibid.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid., P. 5.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid.
19. These are SADC (Southern African Development Community), ‘France CFA Zone’ (Communaute Financiere Africaine), The League of Arab States’, CEPIGL (Communaute Economic des Pays des Grand Lacs – Economic Community of the Great Lake Countries), ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States), PTA (Preference Trade Area for Eastern and Southern Africa), OIC (Organisation of the Islamic Conference) and OPEC (Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries).
20. There are 16 members consisting of Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo.
21. There are 23 members made up of Angola, Burundi, Comoros, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda, Seychelles, Somalia, Sudan, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, Zaire, Zambia, Zimbabwe.
23. Ibid.
24. Ibid.
25. Ibid.
26. Rainer Schweickjert, ‘Regional Integration in Eastern and Southern Af-
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27. Ibid., p. 53.
28. Ibid.
29. Ibid., p. 55.
33. Ibid.
34. Usman Bugaje, 'War by Other Means', Op Cit., p. 22.
35. Ibid.
36. Leo Tolstoy, What Then Must We Do? ch. 16, 1886. (tr. A. Maude)
39. These eight items are contained in Ibid. PP. 255-264. They include: 1. Inadequate economic growth; 2. Insufficient investment in and use of human resources; 3. People, food and the environment; 4. Lack of an enabling environment; 5. Slow progress in regional integration; 6. Poor governance; 7. Inadequate resources; 8. Need for a letter working relationship. See also Ibid., pp. 235-304.
44. Ibid.
45. In the case of Zaire, both appear to be expiring simultaneously Du Bois is reported to have called this dementia, "The childish desire to live for ever".
49. BBC Hausa Service, 530 - 6.00 GMT on Thursday 31/10/96, in a programme, 'Mahallil Sutura' produced by Abubakar Kabir Matazu.


54- Ibid., P. 152